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ALBERT LARGE

The Hermit Naturalist
Of Bucks County, Pennsylvania



A Biographical Sketch by
WILLIAM C. ^{Linton} ARMSTRONG

GENEALOGICAL DEPARTMENT

Reprinted from the Crispin-Pearson Genealogy

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ALBERT LARGE

(The Rambling Naturalist)

Widely Known As

THE HERMIT OF WOLF ROCKS

A Sketch Revealing His Fondness for Natural History and His Love for the
Great Outdoors

By WILLIAM C. ARMSTRONG

2027443

I am going to tell about Albert Large, the Hermit. The reader may query: "Why say anything about him in this book; he was not a descendant of Crispin Pearson, was he?" The answer is, he was not. But there are, I think, several good reasons for speaking of him here.

Albert's celebrity attaches itself to Bucks County and more immediately to the Townships of Buckingham and Solebury, which is the neighborhood of the Pearson Homestead. Also, family tradition insists that Albert Large and Crispin Pearson were related, although the exact degree of relationship has not yet been established.

Moreover, every household listed herein as descending from Crispin Pearson and his wife, Hannah Willson, are kith and kin to the descendants of Joseph Large, who in colonial days was the founder of the family of that surname in Bucks County, as is demonstrated in this book. Furthermore, not only is the story of Albert Large, the naturalist, well worth retelling, but there are some items of information still current among the Pearsons that shed new light on Albert's character and which have never been published before.

Joseph Large (a) and his wife, Elizabeth, migrated from England and dwelt for a time in Massachusetts at Amesbury, a town in the extreme northeastern part of the state, near the New Hampshire line and not far from the ocean. Long afterward Amesbury was, for many years, the home of John Greenleaf Whittier. Joseph and Elizabeth, with their children, removed in 1689 to Burlington County, N. J. A few years later they crossed the Delaware River to Bucks County, Pennsylvania, and settled in Falls Township near Bristol. Joseph died in 1709 and Elizabeth in 1727. Of the children of Joseph (a), the immigrant, we mention two: Elizabeth (b) and Joseph II (b).

Elizabeth Large (b) in 1774 married Richard Lundy II and finally settled in Warren County, N. J. Their youngest child, Margaret Lundy (c) married John Willson and had a daughter, Hannah Willson (d) who became the wife of Crispin Pearson. Hence it came about that all the descendants of Crispin Pearson are also the descendants of the immigrant, Joseph Large (a).

Joseph Large II (b), 1673-1746, married Deborah Wing Dungan and about 1700 bought land of Richard Lundy in Buckingham Township along the mountain, paying £20 for 100 acres. This farm,

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January 15, 1901

REPORT OF THE COMMISSIONERS OF THE LAND OFFICE

1900-1901

The following report of the Commissioners of the Land Office for the year ending December 31, 1900, is hereby published in accordance with the provisions of the Act of the Legislature of 1892, Chapter 107, Section 1, which provides that the report of the Commissioners of the Land Office for each year shall be published in the official gazette of the State.

The report of the Commissioners of the Land Office for the year ending December 31, 1900, is hereby published in accordance with the provisions of the Act of the Legislature of 1892, Chapter 107, Section 1, which provides that the report of the Commissioners of the Land Office for each year shall be published in the official gazette of the State.

The report of the Commissioners of the Land Office for the year ending December 31, 1900, is hereby published in accordance with the provisions of the Act of the Legislature of 1892, Chapter 107, Section 1, which provides that the report of the Commissioners of the Land Office for each year shall be published in the official gazette of the State.

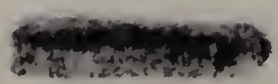
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enlarged by a subsequent purchase, remained in the family for several generations. The dwelling house was about three-quarters of a mile from an outcrop of limestone known as Wolf Rocks, which were so-called because wild animals often took refuge there. These rocks were not on the farm but only a few rods beyond the line.

Joseph Large II (b) and his wife, Deborah, had a son, Joseph III (c). Joseph Large III (c) married Elizabeth Fox and had son, John (d). John Large (d) and his wife, Rachel, had a son, Samuel (e), born 1775, died 1832.

Samuel Large (e) inherited the homestead. He was fond of fox hunting. He was twice married; his first wife was Elizabeth Matthews and his second wife was Mary Doan. Samuel and Elizabeth had three children: Joseph, who became an Episcopalian minister; Albert, the subject of this sketch; and Elizabeth, who became the wife of William Briggs and dwelt near Wolf Rocks.

The lineage given above has been supplied from a manuscript genealogy which is being compiled by Miss Anna W. Smith, of Newtown, Pa. The record shows that Albert Large was of colonial stock and a member of a prominent and prosperous family in Buckingham Valley. Nowadays a biography is considered incomplete unless it is shown that the person whose life is related inherited some characteristic from an ancestor. Here it is:

Albert seems to have got one trait from his father. His father was famous for his skill as a fox hunter. "Samuel's appointments for the chase," says Colonel Paxson, "were the best. His well trained hounds and his fleet steed that knew no fence as a barrier, won the admiration of all beholders. It was a gala day on the hunt when Samuel Large with his aides, the Elys and the Byes, gave chase. Foxes were then abundant and their runways covered a large territory of wooded tracts." Thus we see that Albert had from childhood heard about the fox chase, that most picturesque and exhilarating of field sports, and was familiar with those three fleet animals, horses, hounds and foxes. No wonder that Albert became outdoor-minded.

Albert Large, the sixth of his race to live in America, was born about 1805 on the ancestral homestead in Buckingham Township, Bucks County, Pennsylvania, and there he grew to maturity. My belief is that during the latter years of his life he wandered widely through the sparsely inhabited regions of Pennsylvania, Ohio, and states further west, coming back at intervals and making his headquarters in a cavern less than a mile from his birthplace. No one knows when or where he died; the last that is known of him was his discovery at the cavern on Buckingham Mountain in the Spring of 1858.

Albert is called a hermit, and rightly so, although he lacked some of the characteristics which are usually associated with that word. A hermit is one who abandons society and lives alone. That is just what Albert did, at least in his later years. But he differed from other hermits in several important particulars. Many hermits were

deeply religious, but Albert had no theological interests. Many men have become hermits because of some overwhelming bereavement which suddenly befell them; but the one thing certain about Albert's hermitage is that it developed gradually during a score of years. Some hermits confined themselves to a small narrow cell which they seldom or never left. But as to Albert Large, it is my belief that he wandered widely; that for months at a time he lived and slept under the open sky, exploring new fields, new valleys and new mountains. It is incredible that a man whose spirit felt cabined, cribbed, confined in a schoolhouse, a dwelling house or a barn, would coop himself up month after month in a small cave, low-ceilinged, poorly ventilated and dimly lighted.

An address on the Hermit of Wolf Rocks was delivered before the Bucks County Historical Society by Col. Henry D. Paxson on July 16, 1895, which address was afterward published in Vol. II of that society's Collection of Papers. I deeply appreciate the permission of Col. Paxson and also of the Bucks County Historical Society in permitting me to draw freely on the material embodied in the address aforesaid.

On Friday morning, April 9, 1858, Albert Large the Hermit was discovered in his rock cavern on Buckingham Mountain. The news of the discovery of the long lost Albert Large and his cave spread like a prairie fire. Public curiosity was aroused by circumstances so novel and mysterious. That a man had been living summer and winter for so many years in a cavern of a rock, in sight of the heart of the valley, was too much for the credulity of the neighborhood. The Sunday following his discovery all avenues leading to the mountain were lined with vehicles heavily freighted with humanity, all bent on reviewing the great discovery. They came from Doylestown, New Hope, Lambertville, Flemington, and in short the whole region of the country from Tinicum to Newtown.

For many weeks the excitement was unabated, and the Wolf Rocks and the Hermit's Cave were the principal theme uppermost at inns and stores. Every article found in his cave was thoroughly inspected, and it was not long before everything there, even to the board lining and the mortar wall, were carried away as relics by curious people.

Accounts of his finding were published far and wide at the time, and residents of our county when traveling in the far Western states have frequently been asked about the Buckingham Hermit. Not only in our own land, but on far-off shores, we find transatlantic journals giving the matter great publicity. We give entire an article which appeared at that time in the *Guide*, a paper published in London, England:

AS PUBLISHED IN ENGLAND

EXTRAORDINARY! DISCOVERY OF A HERMIT!

"Hermits are things of the past, only to be found in story books, or old worm-eaten novels of the end of the last century, in which trap doors and caverns play a distinguished and lugubrious part. It is, therefore, with some

The first part of the paper is devoted to a general discussion of the problem of the stability of the equilibrium of a system of particles. It is shown that the stability of the equilibrium depends on the nature of the forces acting between the particles. If the forces are attractive, the equilibrium is stable, while if they are repulsive, it is unstable. This result is derived from the general theory of the stability of equilibrium, which is given in the next section.

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little surprise that we have to record the following well-authenticated story. There exists at a distance of some miles from Doyle's Town, Pennsylvania, a mountain known as the Wolf Rock. Goats alone can find pasture on its barren cliffs, and even they must be sadly starved to seek food on these naked and jagged stone hills.

"A few weeks ago, however, two blacks from Doyle's Town started in search of three stray goats and tracked them to the foot of Wolf Rock. They had no alternative then but to scale the rugged mountain. It was no easy task for the hunters who nearly all the time had to crawl upon their hands and knees. Evening drew in, and yet there were no signs of more than one of the goats. Accordingly, they made up their minds to descend when their attention was attracted to a noise in some hollow of the hill. Negroes are naturally curious while they even fancied they were upon the track of the two fugitives. They determined then to explore further and advanced towards the entrance of a mysterious looking grotto. It was a narrow fissure obstructed by roots and stones.

"After much exertion, one succeeded in crawling in upon his face, but just as his eyes were becoming used to the darkness a voice from out of the gloom cried, 'What do you want?' The negro knew not what to say. He stammered out that he was looking for a goat. For some minutes there was no reply, then a mysterious voice cried out: 'Wretch, you advance to your destruction. One step more and you are a dead man.' The black could stand it no longer but backed out as speedily as possible from the hollow and rapidly regained Doyle's Town, telling everybody he met that he had been face to face with the Prince of Darkness.

"Now the inhabitants of Doyle's Town are not superstitious, but they are curious. They accordingly determined to learn the truth. Plentifully supplied with arms, lanterns, etc., they surrounded the cavern, after lighting a great fire at its entrance. The supposed demon, not liking to endure the fate of Marshall Pelissier's Arabs, came forth. He was a man of herculean stature, clothed in skins of goats and foxes, with long hair and beard, and singularly wild eyes. He was at once made prisoner and his dwelling examined.

"It was a large grotto, divided into three compartments, lined with moss and receiving light and air from above. There was a fireplace, a comfortable bed, and numerous remains of poultry were there which explained the frequent and mysterious disappearance of fowls, etc., which had been noticed by the neighboring farmers for some years.

"Questioned as to his name and strange existence, the Sybarite declared his name to be Albert Large. He assured his captors that for forty years he had dwelt in that retired cavern, never leaving it but at night to hunt for the poultry, goats and pigs on which he fed. A disappointment in love had driven him to this extremity."

Here ends the preposterous account that was published in England.

I have given the account of the Hermit's discovery as it was published in Europe. I now give Colonel Paxson's account, which states clearly the facts gathered by the Colonel from well authenticated sources:

COLONEL PAXSON'S ACCOUNT

"On the morning of April 9, 1858, as William Kennard, a well-known colored man of this township, was passing along the foot of the Wolf Rocks, he observed smoke issuing from the Rocks and heard a strange noise like the rattling of tinware, or to use his own words, 'like the dragging of a kettle by a chain.' He became alarmed and ran to another part of the mountain to obtain the company of another colored man, Moses Allen, to go back with him and make some explorations.

The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions. It emphasizes that every entry should be supported by a valid receipt or invoice. The text also mentions the need for regular audits to ensure the integrity of the financial data. Furthermore, it highlights the role of the accounting department in providing timely and accurate information to management for decision-making purposes.

In addition, the document outlines the procedures for handling discrepancies and errors. It states that any identified errors should be investigated immediately and corrected as soon as possible. The text also discusses the importance of maintaining proper documentation for all financial activities, including bank statements and tax returns. The document concludes by reiterating the commitment to transparency and accountability in all financial reporting.

The second part of the document provides a detailed overview of the company's financial performance over the past year. It includes a summary of key financial indicators such as revenue, profit, and cash flow. The text also discusses the company's financial strategy and the challenges it has faced. The document concludes with a statement of confidence in the company's future prospects and a commitment to continued growth and success.

Financial Summary

The following table provides a summary of the company's financial performance for the year 2023. The data shows a steady increase in revenue and profit, reflecting the company's strong performance in the market. The cash flow remains positive, indicating a healthy financial position. The document concludes with a statement of confidence in the company's future prospects and a commitment to continued growth and success.

"The two men, armed with a crowbar, went back to the part of the Rocks from which the sound emanated, and after making considerable explorations were about to abandon the enterprise, when it occurred to them that making a noise might bring the stranger to sight.

"They commenced boring the rock with a crowbar, which had the effect of bringing a voice from some hiding place which asked: 'Who is it and what do you want?' They proceeded to the cleft in the rock and after diligent search succeeded in finding an entrance to a room or cavern in which was a human being. On being called to come out, he refused to do so and denied the obtruders admission, threatening to 'put balls through them both' if they attempted to enter. The two men thought it unsafe to proceed further without reinforcements and they accordingly secured the services of several stalwart men from the limestone quarries of the late Aaron Ely.

"The large party, plentifully armed with crowbars, churn-augurs and other quarrymen's tools, returned to the Rocks and began the search. The sounding of heavy iron bars upon the rock roof of the cavern, with a huge fire at its entrance, and the loud voices of the quarrymen calling upon the occupant to come out, compelled him to yield, and he displaced the large stone that formed the door of his abode and reluctantly came forth.

"In appearance at that time he is described as a man about the average size, with rather round or drooping shoulders, over which fell long gray hair in profusion. His beard extended almost to his waist, and with his ancient and tattered clothing and general unkempt appearance he presented a picture of a veritable wild man.

"The exploring party having made a favorable impression on him by the promises that no injury should be done him, he at length became composed and gave them some account of his history and mode of living, and invited them to inspect his den. The entrance was from the north and could only be effected by going on all-fours. The first place they entered was his kitchen, or culinary department. The roof was high enough for a man to stand erect. In it were found a rude fireplace, some pipe to carry off the smoke, several buckets, a powder keg with a leather strap for a handle, several tin plates, an iron pot for boiling his food, and a number of minor utensils.

"The next apartment was his sleeping room, which was separated from the kitchen by a rough mortar wall of his own construction. This room was not high enough for a man to walk erect, but when once ensconced therein its occupant was pretty cosy and comfortable. It contained a pretty good mattress that served him as a bed, an old stool and a few other articles that made up his chamber suit. This room was so surrounded by board work and mortar that the penetration of dampness was impossible.

"At the entrance leading to the cave was a large stone which he rolled away at pleasure when he wanted to go out and which was carefully replaced when he returned and entered his sanctum. Altogether his cave was a place of some comforts, and to a man who wished to be secluded from the world was capable of being a resort of much happiness and pleasure."

Here ends Colonel Paxson's account of the Hermit and of the Hermit's abode.

RESCUED FROM A LIME-KILN

The predominating rock in Bucks County is limestone, hence kilns for burning it were numerous. Cord wood and broken limestone having been placed in alternate layers, the kiln was fired. The burning took several days and was attended with the production of a deadly gas. The mass retained its heat for weeks and such places have always been in cold weather the favorite hangouts for wanderers.

Albert was perfectly familiar with the operations and the danger involved. His misadventure, which nearly cost him his life owing to a shift of the wind during the night, at the kiln of a neighbor, was the occasion of the most minute description which has come down to us of Albert.

William H. Johnson, a near neighbor of Albert Large, owned several lime-kilns. Mr. Johnson related the following incident:

"One of the hands brought intelligence early in the morning that a man was lying at the top of one of the kilns, then on fire, and that he believed him to be dead. We went to the place and found the person still in the same position as when first seen. His face was turned toward the heated stone forming the top, and upon examination it showed a livid paleness. His eyes were entirely closed. A close inspection showed a slight breathing at long intervals. The kiln at that time being in full blast, and having been on fire more than a day the carbonic gas was passing off very freely from the vent at the top, and the man having his face very near this opening had inhaled the noxious vapor until his lungs were now incapable of performing their office.

"A phial of hartshorn was applied at once to his nostrils. This very soon gave evidence that his lungs were yet capable of inhaling, although they had suffered a temporary paralysis. His breathing soon became improved, and it was not long before the whole body gave increased signs of animation. He sat up and preparations were soon making for a cup of coffee and some other refreshments. He showed no disposition to converse about his new abode or his singular nap, and although his intended repast was nearly ready, he seized the momentary occasion of the person preparing it being absent from the room to beat a hasty retreat.

"This was the last opportunity (until the time of his discovery) that presented of holding any intercourse with the man who obtained a distinction as the Hermit of the Wolf Rocks on Lahaska Mountain."

Albert had been dodging contact with humans in highways and woodlands for years and he considered himself skilful in seeing them first and avoiding them, hence when caught off guard he felt humiliated and would not stay with his captors, even when tempted by a warm breakfast. He walked off.

I have stated briefly the known facts concerning Albert Large and have presented an estimate of his character, which in my opinion the facts fully justify. I admit I am inclined to favor him, for my mother was a Lundy, a descendant of Richard Lundy and his wife, Elizabeth Large, so you see I belong far out on one of the branches of the Large tree, and being thus a distant kinsman, I wish to say that I am proud of Albert Large.

No one knows what finally became of the hermit, whether he came back to civilization to die; or like the wild things, he searched out some quiet spot to die alone. And perhaps some local newspaper long ago may have printed a little item to this effect: "Skeleton discovered by hunters; no clue to identification." And judging from what we know of him, Albert himself might not have wished it otherwise.

If the spirit of the period in which he lived had been more modern; if the environment furnished by the community been appreciative, how different his life story might have been. Had he been born

under a more friendly star, instead of adorning the legends of a countryside as Bert the Hermit, he might have been widely known as Albert Large the Naturalist.

Here follows, slightly condensed, the closing paragraph of Colonel Paxson's article:

"After his discovery, Albert lingered about the mountain but a short time, and on yonder rocky promontory he is said to have taken his farewell view of the beauty-woven valley, and bade a silent but mournful adieu to those wierd and romantic rocks, endeared to him as a home through all the changing seasons of those many years of his life in solitude. From thenceforth all traces of him and his later history have been lost. Instances of a life like this are very rare, and if all were known of him an interesting volume would be the *Meditations and Reveries of Albert Large, the Hermit of the Wolf Rocks.*"

Much has been said and written about Albert Large the Naturalist of Buckingham Mountain, widely known as Bert the Hermit; but little or nothing has been told hitherto of the hermit's connection with Burn Bridle Hill or by those who were closely associated with him. Some items of information concerning Albert Large have been handed down in the Pearson family and are presented herewith for the first time. The facts thus preserved are not startling, seemingly they are unimportant but they really shed much light on the character of the hermit.

Incidental remarks occurring in letters received from Mrs. Darrow aroused my interest in Albert Large. It was all news to me. My questioning brought further bits of information. Albert grew in stature and in interest, and it is at my request that this article is included here. The larger and most valuable part of the new information supplied by Mrs. Darrow is what Willson Pearson, her father, told her; Willson was a grandson of Crispin Pearson.

Albert Large was born about 1805 and Willson Pearson was born in 1820. They were acquainted for several years and were intimate for more than two years, 1838-1840. Albert was fifteen years older than Willson; in 1838 Albert was 33 and Willson only 18, which made Willson's attitude somewhat that of a learner. Albert was at that time a master of woodcraft; Willson had a bent that way and was glad to learn from Albert, while Albert enjoyed having a sympathetic listener.

They were congenial in taste, the intimacy between them grew out of their common interest in natural history. Albert's bent for the outdoor life had been developed before he and Willson became intimate. Albert hungered for a companion who was interested in the same things, hence he cultivated Willson's friendship and took a pardonable pride in exhibiting to Willson his knowledge and skill in woodcraft.

After 1840 the two friends drifted apart. Willson was of a social disposition and enjoyed being in a crowd, and so lost track of Albert. Of all those who have left information concerning the hermit, Willson Pearson was the one who was most closely associated with him.

In the foregoing remarks we have endeavored to state clearly the splendid opportunity which Willson Pearson had for observing the character of Albert Large. We now begin with Albert's boyhood and take up the story of his life.

Having been born into a good home, Albert was sent to school quite early, a country school, of course, but a good one. Joseph Fell, his teacher, was an able instructor skilled in arousing the interest of his pupils in their studies, but book knowledge made no appeal to Albert. His only relief from indoor restlessness was an occasional truancy, an inborn impulse. Truancy from school is apt to become truancy from home. That is what occurred in this case.

The crisis comes when a truant remains away all night instead of returning home. In the case of Albert it is my opinion that his first adventure of this kind, his first sleeping out, was about the year 1818, when he was thirteen years of age. He probably spent his first night out in the cavern at Wolf Rocks.

There is another thought connected with his school days. His schoolmates in those early days became the mature men and women of his later years; they remembered him as an intelligent and likable boy, and one fact that stands out clearly is that during his entire life Albert Large had the good will and sympathy of the community.

The ordinary chores about the place, which children in those days were required to do, Albert did willingly. But such tasks as weeding the garden, hoeing corn, plowing, and fence-building, which call for undivided attention for several hours at a stretch, were too much for his nature; to be outdoors and not to investigate the things that were happening outdoors was irksome. The sight of a field mouse, or the call of a bird in the hedgerow, or the bark of a dog in the adjoining woods was too much for Albert, he dropped his work whatever it was and it would be an hour or two before he returned.

In this respect he was unreliable, and neither coaxing nor reproof had any effect. When he yielded to this temptation and went off, he would not come back but would wander off and sleep in the woods. Perhaps had he been allowed to have a day off now and then in the woods by himself, the result might have been different, but even that is doubtful, more than doubtful; it was not in the boy.

One correspondent to whom I applied for information writes thus: "Bert did not like work, he was restless and nature-loving. He was a rover, but he was not the freak some made him out to be; that London article makes him out a night prowler, which he certainly was not. The neighbors knew about him and his ways, and it speaks well for Bert that he retained for years the good will of the community. The neighbors gave him food when he was in need of it, which happened only occasionally.

"So long as Albert continued to live at his father's, his absences were not for long periods. But after his sister married William Briggs and began housekeeping near by, Albert made his home with them. It is here we catch a definite glimpse of him. He went off

suddenly and stayed an unusually long time, then he suddenly re-appeared. He came in the night while all were asleep, hung his boots from the rafters in the shed kitchen, went to his room and slept for twenty-four hours and then took up his life with the family again, performing the routine work which he had been doing at the time of his departure as though he had never been away and without one word as to where he had been. The news that Bert was home was soon passed around the community, but it caused no ripple of excitement for the neighbors knew all the circumstances.

One morning the family awoke to find Bert and his boots gone; no leave-taking, no hint as to where he was going or when he would be back. The neighbors noted his absence; their only comment was that life in one spot was too humdrum for Bert, 'he's off to live with the wild things again.' This happened again and again; he would come, stay awhile and be off; his stayings growing shorter each time and his absences longer." Here ends this letter.

Albert's was a balanced ration. Rabbits, squirrels, game birds and fishes supplied him with meat; any farmer's orchard he happened to be near furnished him with fruit, and on these together with wild berries, nuts, honey and parched corn he lived and thrived. A word as to a few of the items mentioned.

He was a master hand at snaring rabbits and quail; in those days all the creeks had suckers and catfish in them, and Bert would stand in the creek very still with one hand in the water and when a sucker came near in a flash he had it. In taking fish he probably preferred set-lines to a fishing rod, thus escaping observation. Wild honey was gathered by him as a sweetening and as a food, and very probably also as an article of barter. His chief diet seems to have been parched corn; he almost always had a handful or two of it in his pocket. Corn probably took the place of bread. He seems to have parched it on the ear and to have shelled it afterward. Corn saves indefinitely, enabling it to be prepared in advance and also to be saved over if meanwhile perishable food comes to hand, and another valuable quality of parched corn is that it is all food, no waste. Indians on the war path relied on parched corn.

His periods of scarcity would be times of heavy snowfall that stayed on the ground. He used to tell how he was snowbound once; he said he had plenty of food, but what worried him was that he nearly ran out of tobacco. April would be his pinching month, in farmer's lingo "between hay and grass" In this connection it is curious to note that he was "discovered" in April. In fancy's eye I reconstruct that scene: I imagine he had spent the winter far away; facing homeward he reached Wolf Rocks on the evening of Thursday and rejoiced to find his betterments undisturbed. Enjoying a sound night's rest and awaking jubilant, he celebrated his return to the land of plenty by beating a tattoo on his pans and kettles. Unfortunately, a passing workman overheard the jubilee. The hermit on his discovery became a nine days' wonder; his mode of living, or

rather his supposed mode of living, struck the popular fancy and rumors of all kinds flying, growing more and more wonderful at each retelling.

One rumor was that he allowed his hair and beard to grow long which so altered his appearance that he bought liquor at the taverns in the neighborhood without being recognized, on which the comment may be made that it is perfectly credible that he bought whiskey, but it is equally incredible that the bartender did not know him.

Another rumor was that he allowed roving counterfeiterers to ply their business in his hiding place and that they gave him small sums of real money for the harboring. Another story had it that he sometimes entertained gypsies who made the woods ring with their hilarious singing and carousals. Such yarns get us nowhere, and their telling is only justified as revealing the mental state of the curiosity seekers who flocked to see him.

At the time of the discovery in 1858, statements were circulated that there were caverns at other places far away which Albert frequented at times, and caves along the Schuylkill River were mentioned. We have proof positive that he visited Michigan; why should we hesitate to believe that he dwelt for a time by the Schuylkill? Reading on the Schuylkill is only fifty miles due west of Lahaska; that distance would be no obstacle to a man traveling light, subsisting on the country and having lots of time on his hands. I can easily believe that Albert took delight in such excursions and made many of them. When ranging over the country he avoided the public roads; one reason he did this is because his chief supply of food was in the woods and thickets.

One mile from Albert's birthplace, but not on his father's farm, there was an outcrop of limestone known as Wolf Rocks. These rocks in one place formed a small cave; this Albert fixed up. It was rather cramped, but he succeeded in making out of it two pretty comfortable living rooms and equipped them with a stove and kitchen utensils, and this was his principal headquarters for a period of forty years, 1818-1858. Albert's favorite headquarters were undoubtedly on Buckingham Mountain, but in the summer time he roamed here, there and everywhere. His natural bent would lead him wherever he could find new things to investigate and study over; the next valley always allured his fancy with novel possibilities. He roamed all over where there were wooded tracts, avoiding the open country.

Willson Pearson said that when he began to work with Bert he soon found that Bert knew more about Burn Bridle forest than he himself did, who was born there; there was not a patch of timber for miles around that Bert did not know all about. In every locality Bert knew places of refuge where he could get out of a storm or spend the night; hollow trees were on his calling list, and thick cedars and limekilns and quarries and overhanging rocks.

The idea formerly current that Albert loafed and slept all day, and its corollary that he prowled through the countryside all night, was nonsense; he slept nights. It is ridiculous what the papers said about him; he was not the freak some made him out to be. His was an active and mildly adventurous life; those who got acquainted with him found him to be a decent fellow. The neighbors knew him and felt kindly toward him, and when he was in need, which was seldom, they gave him food.

Mrs. Darrow's Account of Albert Large

I have before me a letter written by Mrs. Annie E. P. Darrow, under date of January 4, 1932, from Pasadena, Cal. It is a remarkable letter. It was written on the western edge of our continent hundreds of miles from Bucks County, Pa., and seventy-four years after Bert the Hermit disappeared from view in 1858. I call it a remarkable letter because the information it gives transforms a freak hermit into a fresh-air naturalist and furnishes the key to the character of Albert Large. Look on that picture and then on this. The old picture showed a man who led an underground life, getting less sunshine than a woodchuck and who when driven by hunger ventured out only at night and that to pilfer. The new picture reveals a fresh-air enthusiast who was happiest when under the open sky and who would rather sleep on the ground under forest leaves than on a bed under a roof. The letter is full in detail and rich in comment, and I can not bring myself to tear these graphic sentences out of their setting:

"DEAR COZ: Well, I hope 1932 will treat us better than 1931 did, at least give us more rain and not so much heat. We had a rainy Christmas and quite a bit since, but we had a nice New Year's Day for the Tournament of Roses. About a million people were out to see the Rose Parade that day. The rest went but I stayed home with the two babies. Such things tire me so, and I don't like to be in such crowds any more. I've seen it about a half dozen times, so it is an old thing to me.

"Thy last letter came today; and thee, like me, is getting old. I just can't do as I could even a few years ago. I shall be seventy my next birthday and am abler than my mother was at that age, but she almost quit work (except mending) and picked up physically and lived to be eighty-five, I think, I forget exactly. So many babies around tire me, but I like the little imps and would be lost without them.

"Yes, I wish to donate several of those Pearson books. I want Harry Scarborough to have some, he has helped so much; and also Dr. George Burton Pearson, of Newark, Del., to have some. Then I expect to have some sent out here and I will gradually give them to those who helped me. But I will send a list soon so, if I drop out, somebody will know who is to have them. I will be glad to have them done and paid for; off my mind. Thee is to have a generous

number; I won't hear of any thing else. People are beginning to get interested in them, so they may sell without much trouble.

"I see thee is still interested in Bert the Hermit. Yes, there was much interest in his life, although few people knew the real Bert. I do not know when his mother died, but she sympathized with him and his father didn't. I don't remember hearing of any love affair in connection with him, but maybe I've forgotten; but he just loved the outdoor roving life in company with the wild things, like an Indian.

"Father was about eighteen or nineteen when he came to know him, and Bert was some years older. They saw much of each other for several years, and then father lost track of him. Bert avoided people, and father wanted to be right in a crowd, so as father got older and ran more and more they drifted apart.

"My father probably knew Albert more intimately than any other person outside of his immediate kin; their love of wild things was seemingly a bond of union between them. He knew Albert from actual contact during several years and he sized him up pretty well. After those few years father knew little of him, nor apparently did anyone else. Father thought some of the stories afloat were mere guesswork. He declared that Albert was more honest in most ways than most other people of his time. He read the accounts published in the newspapers and pointed out what he regarded as unfounded inferences, and he related many details which impart a different coloring to the picture.

"For two winters Albert lived with James Betz on what is now the Forrest Creek place and in that same house in which Mr. Cook lives now. The older part of that house was built in 1749 by Isaac Pickering, and the other part, the part next to the barn, was put up by James Betz soon after he bought the farm some hundred years ago. In the attic of that house the hermit slept for two winters; that farm was next to my grandfather's and took in part of Burn Bridle forest. During most of those two winters my father worked with Bert in the forest getting out wood to sell; part of the time they worked for James Betz and part of the time for grandfather. I think the reason Bert went over to Solebury those two winters and lived with James Betz was to be near Burn Bridle Hill; he wanted to be near my grandfather and my grandmother, for he knew them both well and they liked and humored him. For some years after that he would often come along the edge of the woods near the house and whistle for father to join him for the day on the Hill; he sought these interviews mostly on Sundays when he knew father was at liberty to come.

"Albert Large was a born naturalist. He loved the wooded hills and their wild inhabitants and could not be satisfied to live within the four walls of a house; that is why in the summer time he began to go off alone, living the life of a hermit and roaming the forests. He did not relish hard work and was called lazy. He was not a dependable worker, for as soon as he saw a bird or anything that

interested him, he would stop to watch it and often idle an hour away before he would be ready to work again. He had a keen eye for every thing in nature; father said of him, 'I never knew another who could see and remember so much. 2027443

"During the winters they worked together in Burn Bridle forest. Bert was good company and would talk about birds and trees and other objects and tell his adventures. Stormy days they would flail out grain in the barn or work at some job about the buildings; but Bert was restless at such times and wanted to be in the open. His senses of hearing, smell and sight were acute, like an Indian's. Father had keen sight and hearing and was a pretty good naturalist, and he gave his cousin credit for what he knew. Father became a bee-homer and every fall had several trees to cut for honey. The hermit taught him the trick. Bert was bright, very bright some ways and odd in others. Father said Bert had nothing to say before people who were not interested in the things he was; but let him be with those who understood and sympathized with him, like my father and grandfather, then he could talk and talk well, for he knew what he was talking about. Father agreed with thee; he said that if Bert's education had been good enough to permit him to write down what he knew he would have been a famous man.

"Bert soon learned to take care of himself, even in cold weather. He could sweep together a pile of leaves and pack them so close that they were impervious to cold, and he always had a homespun blanket or two. The clothes he wore had huge pockets, and he needed such pockets. In one he carried a flint with which he could quickly strike a spark (sulfur matches were not yet in common use); in another pocket he had a handful or two of dry leaves that blazed easily. He was never without salt. He always carried with him a piece of gourd that he ate and drank out of; it was the shape of a small deep saucer. He parched dry corn on the ear somehow, and father said he never knew him to be without parched corn in his pocket, and when nuts were in season he always had some of those, too. He baked potatoes, corn, rabbits, quail and fish in hot coals for father to taste, and when seasoned with salt father said they made mighty fine eating. In baking he got corn husks if he could. In these he wrapped the meat and vegetables and buried them in the ashes to bake. If he could not get husks, he used leaves.

"Albert always had a little money in his pocket. If he ran out he would snare some rabbits or quail to sell, or would work a day or two for some farmer. In the winter, for a few years, he would hire with some farmer for a warm bed and meals; but when the buds began to swell and the sap to flow he would be off again. The hills and forest called him and he could not resist. After the first few years of his hermit life he took care of himself without bothering to work for anybody. As the friends and associates of his youth moved away or died off, he lost interest in the affairs of the community and naturally kept more and more by himself.

"Sometimes when he saw a woman working in her milkhouse he would go and ask her for a drink of milk, and he said 'I was never refused.' He would fill his pockets with fruit from anybody's orchard or take a few ears of corn from a field, but only enough to satisfy his hunger. Thieves who raided chicken roosts found Bert a convenient person on whom to lay their offenses in order to save their own skin. It made Bert angry when such rascals laid their maraudings to him. And this, I suppose, is what led him to the trick of leaving 'his mark' as he called it. He always carried parched corn in his pocket, and when he entered a milkhouse for a drink or a bite of anything that might be there, he always left a few grains of corn right where the people would see it so they would know who had been there.

"'As long as I knew him,' said Willson Pearson, 'Bert always had good linsey clothes: pants, shirt and roundabout, and his clothes were kept well-mended. I think Bert's mother, while she lived, managed to supply her son with homespun clothes unbeknown to the father. Bert hinted as much.' There is no room for doubt that Bert's mother sympathized with him much more than his father did, which is perfectly understandable. It seems impossible for such assistance to have been rendered without the father's knowledge; probably he knew of it but let the mother do it and looked the other way. This, as well as other evidence, shows that Bert, although he spent much of his time in the open, was in appearance generally presentable; he was no tatterdemalion.

"We know that Albert when overtaken by sudden thunderstorms sought shelter within hollow trees. His account of one of his adventures has come down to us. The inside of one tree was too narrow for comfort so he scraped away the soft interior and made it roomier. Here he was storm-stayed for three days. After his corn gave out his only food was a few berries which he ventured out in the rain to pick. Sitting quietly within his shelter he heard the patter, patter, patter of wild feet seeking the same refuge, and then after a short interval he heard the patter, patter, patter of departing feet.

"Albert was asked once whether wild animals ever troubled him at night when he slept out. His reply was that occasionally one would come smelling around to find out who he was, but he said he never felt worried.

"There I nodded; it is late and my eyes are going shut. It is too late to write more at this time than to say that I have always felt proud of Bert and that it is well to include a sketch of him in the Pearson book, as he spent much time on Burn Bridle Hill, which is part of the Pearson Homestead.

"I am afraid that thee, like me, is getting too old to do much more, but the doctors say we live longer if we have a hobby.

"Thine,

"MRS. DARROW."

Here ends Mrs. Darrow's letter.

I have now told what I have been able to learn about Albert Large. By far the greater part of the original information here presented is based on the testimony of Willson Pearson, born 1820, died 1900. He was born in Solebury and always lived there. He knew Albert Large personally. He was 38 years of age at the time of the "discovery" in 1858. He heard it all. He was a man of intelligence and was well qualified to bear witness to the character of Albert Large.

In closing this sketch I append some miscellaneous observations which are not entirely unrelated to the matters already presented. The reason why so few incidents and anecdotes have come down to us concerning the subject of this sketch is that when Albert was accidentally trapped in so dramatic a fashion in 1858 and became for a brief period of time an object of wide curiosity, the neighbors held their tongue and gave curiosity seekers scant information; not because what they knew was discreditable, but because the telling would at that time serve no good purpose.

Joseph Large, Albert's brother, became an Episcopalian clergyman and had a pastorate in Michigan. On one occasion, while he was conducting a religious service, he was informed that a scantily clad man was without and wished to see him. Imagine his surprise when the stranger proved to be his brother Albert, who had walked all the way from Bucks County, Pennsylvania. Albert never told his folks at home that he had been to Michigan. They learned this fact from letters received by them from Rev. Joseph Large.

Albert lived in a community where shotguns were familiar implements. There is little doubt that Albert knew how to use one and that he did use one occasionally, but he took no delight in hunting. He was not a hunter. He secured all the animal food he cared for in other ways. The only use he had for a gun would have been in the winter to shoot a deer, when venison would keep. A gun was an encumbrance; its effectiveness was ruined by dampness and its report betrayed his presence.

Albert seemed instinctively to know when a wild thing was near before he heard or saw it. This ability is not magic; it is a mark of high intelligence in a naturalist. Every wild thing gravitates to its ideal habitat; close observation and long experience enable the naturalist to recognize the habitat and he expects to find the wild thing there.

The children born in a community during a given decade are variously gifted. The condition of that community as to occupations and ideals is favorable to some of those children; to children with different gifts it is unfavorable. The law of success is that frontier agricultural community was work, hard work. Children endowed with gifts that did not coincide with the dominant line of thought were out of luck. Some of these fall in with the trend of environment and become commonplace; occasionally one refuses to bend or break, he follows his own path; such a one was Albert Large.

So far as can be judged at this distance the parents of Albert handled their problem with tact. They tried to induce their son to follow the path of development suited to the community in which he was to live. Labor, hard and incessant, was the ideal of the community, but Albert could not buckle down to it all the time. When the boy's natural bent asserted itself, the parents yielded sorrowfully. They kept their son so far as they could within the circle of their influence; there was no driving forth. Whenever he chose to go away, he was at liberty to come back and resume his place in the household without any upbraiding. That was the part of wisdom. It is my opinion that the basal cause of the gradual withdrawal of Albert Large from his kinsfolk and society and his adoption of the solitary life was a fundamental trait in his character which manifested itself in boyhood and which steadily strengthened as he advanced in years. He naturally sorrowed at his mother's death, and tradition hints that he suffered the pangs of jilted love. I brush aside both these events as inadequate causes to explain his career; they were transient and produced no permanent effect. The dates of these events have not been ascertained, but they probably occurred long before his break with society.

It may not be out of place to indicate the difference in conditions between the woodlands of Albert Large's day and their condition today. The area was much larger than now; not only that, but the character of it was different. Much of it has been cut over and is now mere waste land covered with scrub; then nutbearing trees were of prime size, were rooted in rich soil and bore abundantly. When I was a boy we gathered regularly ten or twelve bushels of hickory-nuts every year to sell; now on the same farm we have to skirmish lively to collect a half bushel for winter use. And chestnuts were equally abundant, and it was so all over. The forests and waste places of Pennsylvania in those days furnished ample sustenance for human beings. The streams and ponds swarmed with fish. Quail, pheasants, wild pigeons and wild turkeys were abundant; so were rabbits and squirrels. Acres of raspberries, blackberries and huckleberries ripened in seasonal succession. Hazelnuts, chestnuts, butter-nuts, walnuts, and hickorynuts could be gathered by the bushel and were easily preserved for months.

Another great difference is that our present woodlots have few hollow trees; such trees are now culled out for stove wood, and to prevent the spread of fungus diseases and to clear the ground for a younger growth. But in Albert's day the woods were full of hollow trees; being useless as timber the lumbermen did not cut them. The wild things made constant use of them as homes and as places of refuge. The smaller openings were utilized by squirrels and by swarms of bees, the larger ones by raccoons and panthers, and even by bears and wolves.

The reader of today should not overlook the significance of honey in rural communities at that time. Honey and beeswax were

staple articles of barter; good wax was as good as cash, being used in many industries. These may have constituted for Albert a substantial source of income. Domestic bees when swarming sometimes go wild and take up their abode in hollow trees, often at considerable height above the ground, and store therein large quantities of honey. We know that Albert was skilled in finding such storage places and in removing the honey, an operation that required an axe, a saw and a ladder, all of which could be secured at any farm house. Albert's signature, claiming prior ownership, was probably hacked on many a bee tree. Only experts knew how to mark bees, to line bees and to angle bees. Those curious to appreciate the refinements of the bee-homer's art may consult J. Fennimore Cooper's "Oak Openings."

Also in the "Prairie," the last of the Leatherstocking Tales, Cooper introduces as one of his heroes, Paul Hover, a frontier bee-hunter or professional gatherer of wild honey.

The era is now past when a man can sustain himself by woodcraft. The Civil War marked the end of that possibility. Bert the Hermit can have no successor.

